

# SR 99 Tunnel and Toll Commencement Educational Marketing

## Overview of SR 99 paid educational campaign

- The SR 99 tunnel will dramatically change the way people get around Seattle and we need to educate the approximately 90,000 daily drivers of the viaduct on how this affects their commute.
- One of our most important target audience is drivers using existing mid-town entrances and exits who need to learn a new route – hence the main message of the educational marketing that the tunnel is a direct route.
- We also anticipate there will be drivers who don't use the viaduct today who decide to use the tunnel because it offers a direct route.
- Drivers who understand the route of the tunnel and where the entrances and exits are will have a better experience. This will reduce the potential for confusion or frustration experienced by drivers because they were unaware of the new route difference.
- Broadcast media helps ensure awareness, but we have the added challenge of encouraging drivers to learn more because their routes will change based upon where they're going.
- For a detailed explanation of how to use the tunnel, we rely on our webpage 99tunnel.com and other online tools such as new videos showing how to get around.
- It is important that a large number of people are aware that the tunnel will be free for all drivers for a limited time. This will encourage broad-based use and allow drivers to integrate the tunnel into their daily commute patterns both before and after tolling begins.
- Without implementing a paid media campaign, WSDOT runs the risk of low awareness and fewer drivers using the tunnel in the opening weeks.

## Why can't WSDOT rely on traditional media?

- We know not everyone watches TV news or reads the newspaper. The educational media campaign reaches those who may not receive our message in traditional media.
- To ensure a broad-based communication effort that reaches a wide demographic population in the Puget Sound region, paid advertising is necessary to supplement information in the media.
- Surveys conducted during the educational marketing for I-405 express toll lanes showed an integrated campaign was crucial to reaching drivers. The top places people remembered hearing and seeing information were TV (ad or news), radio ads, newspaper articles, newspaper ads, internet, billboards, and friends and family.

### TOP PLACES PEOPLE REMEMBERED HEARING AND SEEING INFORMATION ABOUT I-405 EXPRESS TOLL LANES



1. TELEVISION (ADS OR NEWS)



2. RADIO ADS



3. NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

4. NEWSPAPER ADS



5. INTERNET



6. BILLBOARDS



7. FRIENDS OR FAMILY

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## Educational campaign themes

- WSDOT chose the theme 'It's a thing' for the TV commercials because it clearly communicates the most compelling message: The tunnel is a direct route between the Space Needle and stadiums.
- Billboards and other elements of the campaign reinforce the direct route message visually with a tunnel between two points.



## Budget

WSDOT conducts paid educational marketing prior to the start of tolling on new facilities, including the SR 520 Bridge and I-405 express toll lanes.

- Nearly two-thirds of the budget goes directly to reaching drivers. Planned costs for paid advertising for TV, radio, print ads, billboards, gas stations, transit, and digital:
  - Tunnel opening \$800,000
  - Toll commencement \$2 million
- Research, development and production of creative campaign for SR 99 tunnel opening and toll commencement: \$1.6 million.

WSDOT has planned educational marketing for a longer period at toll commencement because it is a new travel shed for tolling and fewer drivers have a **Good To Go!** pass, which allows them to pay the lowest rate and save \$2 on every trip.

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